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Implementation of Psychological Interview and Testing in a Large Sperm Bank

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Catherine Sham
SKMC Class of 2021
SI CTR Abstract
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Implementation of Psychological Interview and Testing in a Large Sperm Bank
Catherine Sham, Andrea Braverman, Robert Mora, Makenzie Perdue, Jaime Shamonki

Introduction: Historically, sperm donor applicants have been medically but not psychologically evaluated by mental health professionals (MHPs). As social norms and legislation shift toward non-anonymous donation, psychological assessments can provide opportunities to exclude unqualified donors and allow donors to consider the long-term implications of donating.

Objective: To determine the effectiveness of psychological screening in identifying unqualified sperm donors, and to evaluate psychological reasons for disqualification through clinical interview and testing.

Methods: A retrospective chart review of 229 potential donors who passed initial qualification at a major sperm bank from February 2017 to February 2018. All potential donors were evaluated by MPHs using clinical interview and Personality Assessment Inventory. Descriptive statistics were used for analysis.

Results: Following assessments and interviews, 33 (14.4%) of the 229 applicants were disqualified and 32 (13.9%) additional candidates self-selected out of the program. Of the 33 disqualified applicants, 66.7% had abnormal psychological testing and 39.4% had abnormal clinical interviews. Additional reasons for disqualification included inability to manage long-term demands as a donor, family history of psychopathology, and suspected substance use.

Discussion: Implementation of psychological evaluations in the donor application process at one major sperm bank led a number of donors to be disqualified, primarily due to abnormal psychological testing or clinical interviews. Others withdrew from the donation process after discussing the complexities of becoming a sperm donor with MHPs. As anonymity in gamete donation becomes increasingly improbable, it is critical for candidate donors to better understand the process, and to manage possible contact with donor-conceived persons.